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The Kirkpatrick Factor

By Jane Rosen

SHE IS A PHENOMENON IN American politics: a woman who has never run for office, who failed to get the Government posts she really wanted, and who is now being seriously talked about as a possible contender for the Vice Presidential — maybe even Presidential — nomination in 1988.

A month after stepping down as the United States' chief delegate to the United Nations, Jeane Jordan Kirkpatrick has, if anything, increased her national stature. She may not have won appointment as Secretary of State or national security adviser, but she is being wooed as a speaker at Republican events around the country, she is an all-but-constant presence on television talk shows and President Reagan respects her political power. Twelve days ago, after a whirlwind trip to Honduras and El Salvador, she testified before Congress as part of the Administration's effort to win Congressional support for financing of the Nicaraguan contras.

Many Republican leaders are impressed. "She's going to be a major political factor in 1988," says New York's Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato. Adds Senator Robert W. Kasten of Wisconsin: "We've got only two leaders in the country today, the President on domestic matters and Jeane on international affairs."

Nor is her appeal limited to Republicans. According to some of her associates, a private poll in the New York-New Jersey area shows that Dr. Kirkpatrick has one of the highest positive identifications of anyone tested. Her support in the poll is said to transcend party and sex. "She is a viable contender," concedes David Garth, a leading consultant to Democratic candidates. Mr. Garth believes she could make substantial inroads into the Democratic vote in a Presidential campaign.

Dr. Kirkpatrick has a double appeal: as a strong battler for American ideals at the United Nations — and as a woman. In a sense it was Walter F. Mondale, a politician Dr. Kirkpatrick scorns, who opened the door for her when he picked Geraldine A. Ferraro as his running mate. "From now on," says Howard H. Baker Jr., the former Senate majority leader and himself a Presidential hopeful, "when you look at the lists of good people for President or Vice President in both parties, you'll find qualified women on them."

Of course, there are major obstacles. She has no public platform from which to run for office and no experience as a campaigner. Her tough, conservative foreign-policy stance has antagonized many, even some members of the moderate wing of the Republican Party.

But last month, Dr. Kirkpatrick removed one formal obstacle when, with considerable fanfare, she changed her party affiliation from Democratic to Republican. And, as the first American woman independently to achieve real power in the arena of international affairs, she has shown a marked ability to hold her own in the political wars. The story of her four years at the United Nations and as a key Presidential adviser sheds light, not only on her strengths and weaknesses, but on the contest within the Republican Party over how conservative conservatives should be. The outcome of that contest could determine her chances for national office.

DURING A RECENT SERIES OF INTERviews Jeane Kirkpatrick mused about her role in Government, offering some of her ideas.

"I was the only woman in our history, I think, who ever sat in regularly at top-level foreign-policy-making meetings. Those arenas have always been closed to women, not only here but in most other countries. And it matters a great deal. It's terribly important, maybe even to the future of the world, for women to take part in making the decisions that shape our destiny."

DR. KIRKPATRICK IS unabashedly pro-American and has no patience with "guilt-ridden liberals who are obsessed with self-criticism." She chooses her words carefully: "I believe deeply that the United States is a legitimate and extraordinarily successful society, not perfect but not a sick society. I believe in building American strength and, in measured ways, of using American power — not force, power — in pursuit of our interests.

"I'm convinced that Marxist-Leninist movements are profoundly hostile to human well-being. I don't think there is a more misleading concept than this concept of superpower rivalry which suggests a kind of symmetry between the United States and Russia. There is no symmetry. We don't wish to extend our hegemony. They do."

She questions what she calls the "traditional es-

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tablishment approach to foreign policy," and she is concerned about the corporate and banking communities' influence on the State Department. "I think the establishment probably emphasizes private-sector economic concerns, that is, profits, more than I would," she says.

Dr. Kirkpatrick would be considerably more lenient, for instance, with debtor countries that are friendly to the United States, notably in Latin America and Africa: "I can't see, for example, why it is reasonable for miserably poor, debt-ridden countries — particularly those with new and promising democratic governments such as Argentina — to have to labor under the additional yoke of paying high, high interest rates on debts long since accumulated in order to maintain the profit levels of international banks. I just cannot understand that."

She believes we should provide more help to countries and peoples that resist the Soviet Union. "I obviously don't mean East Europe — I'm not on a crusade," she says. But she would support military aid "to the Afghan guerrillas, to Cambodia, to the Gulf states to help control the Iran-Iraq war, to Chad to contain Qaddafi's moves." And she favors a "more vigorous use of non-military instruments of foreign policy — information instruments, technological instruments, diplomatic instruments, all sorts of things to achieve our objectives."

Many people, including some Republicans who share her world view, are put off by her manner. She is criticized as being dogmatic and unwilling to compromise. For all the admiration she has won for her intellect and her stands at the United Nations and within the Administration, she has also inspired a good deal of resentment — and jealousy.

FOR FOUR YEARS JEANE Kirkpatrick's public stage was the United Nations, but she played a far more important role behind the scenes in Washington.

With the President's assent, Judge William P. Clark, the national security adviser until 1983, made her an independent counsel to the President. She could see the President whenever she wanted and she could telephone him at any time.

"She had absolutely direct access to him," says Judge Clark, "sometimes to the consternation of the two Secretaries of State [Alexander M. Haig Jr. and George P. Shultz]. When she put her feet under the desk of the Oval Office, the President listened and he usually agreed with her."

The President made a point of showing his fondness for her. Once, Judge Clark recalls, at a Cabinet meeting following one of her well-publicized and bruising battles with Secretary of State Haig, the President deliberately walked across the room, put his arm around Dr. Kirkpatrick and told her she was doing a good job. "He was letting us all know," Judge Clark says.

She was also a member of the Administration's top-level foreign-policy-making unit, the National Security Planning Group. Every week or so, the group gathered in the Situation Room in the White House basement — the President, the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of Central Intelligence, the national security adviser, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the White House chief of staff, the White House Counsel and Jeane Kirkpatrick.

"She had a substantial impact," says Lawrence S. Eagleburger, the former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, who often sat in on these meetings. "She has a superb intellect." Adds General John W. Vessey Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, "She always gave us extraordinarily knowledgeable analyses of the impact of what we were saying and doing."

But there were turf fights. Says Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger: "Some people felt the U.N. Ambassador should be subordinate rather than an independent member of the group."

Dr. Kirkpatrick often disagreed with the majority, and that seemed particularly to annoy the Secretary of State. There has often been an institutional conflict between U.N. representatives and Secretaries of State because — though the representative must report to the Secretary and is directly responsible to him — at Cabinet and National Security Planning Group meetings, the two are on an equal footing.

The conflict was particularly evident when Mr. Haig was running the State Department. "He was a general," says a member of the security-planning group, "and he wanted to snap his fingers and shout 'GO!' But Jeane would talk back to him."

Dr. Kirkpatrick would also challenge the assumptions and proposals of Secretary of State Shultz. Says Mr. Eagleburger, "No Secretary of State likes that, especially from someone he considers more or less his subordinate."

DR. KIRKPATRICK LIKES TO tell of the National Security Planning Group meeting during which someone noticed a mouse making its way with composure toward the table. "A mouse?" the members said to one another. "A mouse? In the Situation Room?" And Dr. Kirkpatrick thought to herself, "That mouse is no more surprising a creature to see in the Situation Room than I am — no stranger a presence here, really, than I am."

She always considered herself an outsider: an intellectual in a Government of businessmen and bureaucrats, a lifelong Democrat among Republicans, a woman advising an Administration not known for sympathy toward the women's movement.

Born in Oklahoma in 1926, she had decided in her early 20's to pursue a career in what was then a male preserve:

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political science. As a professor at Georgetown University, she taught and wrote about politics; her husband, Evron M. Kirkpatrick, is a political scientist.

In the 1950's and 60's the Kirkpatricks and their friends, including Hubert H. Humphrey, were all cold-war liberals, supporting the Fair Deal and the War on Poverty while strongly opposing Communism and Soviet expansionism. She served on Democratic Party committees and worked in the 1968 Humphrey Presidential campaign.

But Dr. Kirkpatrick became increasingly alienated by the antiwar violence of the late 1960's and by the growing influence of the counterculture and its adherents in the Democratic Party. When George S. McGovern was nominated for President in 1972, she became one of the organizers of the neo-conservative movement.

In 1979, Commentary magazine, the neo-conservative flagship, published her now famous essay "Dictatorships and Double Standards." In it she argued that right-wing autocrats are usually more compatible with American interests than Marxist totalitarian dictators. The essay blamed the Carter Administration for helping to topple anti-Communist dictators in Iran and Nicaragua, paving the way for anti-American extremist regimes.

Critics assailed the essay as an apology for human-rights abuses. But President Reagan viewed it differently. The article led to her becoming an adviser in his 1980 campaign, and eventually to her appointment to the United Nations post.

AT THE UNITED NAtions Dr. Kirkpatrick quickly became known for her confrontations with the anti-American majority and her vigorous defense of American interests.

She sent the voting records of every member nation to Congress. The message was clear: Any country that opposed the United States on an issue Washington considered important might find its American aid drastically reduced.

Her tough stance got results. An Arab effort to expel Israel was rejected. A Cuban effort to accuse Washington of "colonizing" Puerto Rico failed. A Nicaraguan resolution assailing American policy in Central America was blocked. The United States was able to modify some of the Security Council's more extreme resolutions. And the General Assembly virtually stopped singling out the United States for special condemnation.

Dr. Kirkpatrick's tactics were criticized. Some Western diplomats thought she might have achieved as much with quieter, more patient diplomacy. One of them, who says Dr. Kirkpatrick is "actually very pleasant personally, not a bit of an ogre," was irritated by what he calls her "political moralizing. She talks about the moral difference between the superpowers. And when we fail to find any moral difference between Afghanistan and Grenada, she makes it clear that we're dim-witted."

No one doubts, however, that Dr. Kirkpatrick reasserted American authority at the United Nations. And that was only part of her impact.

A FEW MONTHS after President Reagan's inauguration in 1981, Dr. Kirkpatrick and the other members of the National Security Planning Group met to discuss Central America. There was mounting evidence that Nicaragua was aiding the guerrillas in El Salvador. What was to be done?

Secretary of State Haig offered a startling recommendation: the United States should attack "the source" — Cuba — either with a blockade or with military force. As Dr. Kirkpatrick recalls: "We were all incredulous. Dick Allen [the former national security adviser, Richard V. Allen] whispered, 'Did you hear what I heard? If we're not very careful that guy's going to get us into war.'"

When the decision was made to build up the anti-Sandinista guerrillas with covert aid, Dr. Kirkpatrick strongly supported it. As a political scientist she had studied Latin America for years and she was convinced, she wrote in a 1983 newspaper article, that "there is a plan to create a Communist Central America which, if successful, will have momentous consequences for our security ... and for the unfortunate people of Central America."

Her arguments reinforced President Reagan's hard-line instincts, and her forceful presentation of her case in public speeches and the media helped win support for his controversial Central American policies.

By July, Mr. Haig was out [illegible] though the new Secretary of State and Dr. Kirkpatrick were in general agreement on Central America, they differed in their emphasis and, in light of the rivalry that developed, that became important.

Mr. Shultz believed that in addition to backing the contras, the Administration should try to negotiate an agreement directly with the Sandinista regime. Dr. Kirkpatrick didn't think bilateral negotiations would be productive or that the Sandinistas would stick to an agreement. She believed the Latin American countries themselves should try to negotiate a formula for a general peace in Central America — the so-called "Contadora process" undertaken by Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico and Panama. Mr. Shultz has never been enthusiastic about Contadora.

"Jeane was very much aware of the risks of having another Cuba in this hemisphere," Secretary Weinberger says. "She didn't want anyone to be beguiled into thinking that just any agreement with Nicaragua would be meaningful."

In 1983 the President sent her to Central America and she returned with a series of recommendations, which he adopted. They included considerably more aid — economic, humanitarian, military and covert — for the region, establishment of a commission headed by Henry Kissinger to draw up long-term national goals and presumably to put a bipartisan gloss on the policy, and American support for the Contadora process.

As it turned out, these recommendations got no place. Congress drastically cut requests for aid, nobody paid much attention to the Kissinger Commission and the Contadora peace talks are still dragging along.

Meanwhile, despite mounting Congressional and public opposition to the covert war, the C.I.A. was pressing the National Security Planning Group to approve more and more clandestine measures involving the use of American

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citizens and equipment.

According to some of her colleagues, Dr. Kirkpatrick several times persuaded the President to veto such proposals, not out of dovishness but because she was worried about the political repercussions. She says she would also have opposed the decision to mine Nicaraguan ports, but it was never discussed by the security-planning group.

Aside from Latin America, Dr. Kirkpatrick's special area of interest has been the Middle East. Although the Reagan Administration's public posture has been, like hers, overwhelmingly pro-Israel, she recalls disagreeing with the majority of the security-planning group on a number of key issues. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, for example, she argued against calling for a cease-fire, though when that became the Administration's position, she publicly supported it. "I knew it would be very hard for Lebanon to restore its sovereignty as long as the Syrian forces remained there," she says. "The Israelis were within a couple of days of driving them out of the Bekaa Valley, and I thought we should keep hands off."

She was also against the "Reagan plan," drafted by Secretary of State Shultz in 1982, for Palestinian autonomy in association with Jordan. "I supported it publicly at the time because the President supported it," she says. "I even wrote a speech praising it. But I don't think we should take responsibility for negotiating peace between Israel and its neighbors. To be successful we would have to bring the kind of pressure to bear on Israel that would destroy it if it didn't comply."

AT A PARTY IN Washington in the spring of 1983, Jeane Kirkpatrick recalls, a White House staff member went over to her and said, with an edge of malice, "We've all noticed how the President pays attention to you."

Dr. Kirkpatrick says she was dumbfounded. She began to wonder whether many people in the Administration felt she had undue influence over the President — and whether that was part of the reason some senior officials had been trying to exclude her from the decision-making process.

But there were other reasons. She says there was a "basic split" in the Administration between those who felt the President should be exposed to open discussion and debate among his aides and those who felt the aides should meet among themselves, reach a consensus as to the best option and then bring it to the President.

"People used to accuse me of not being a 'team player,'" she says. "But I felt it was important for the President to meet with the National Security Planning Group, listen to the discussion, raise questions, hear the interchange of opinion and then make his decisions. I wasn't willing to join with other advisers to present one consensus recommendation."

"To a lot of very senior people," says Lawrence Eagleburger, "that meant she wasn't a team player."

During this time, there were press reports of an ideological struggle in the upper echelons of the Reagan Administration between "moderates" (James A. Baker 3d, White House chief of staff and now Secretary of the Treasury; Mr. Shultz, and their allies) and "conservatives" (Dr. Kirkpatrick, Secretary Weinberger, Intelligence Director William J. Casey and Judge Clark).

But that wasn't the way Dr. Kirkpatrick saw it. "There weren't two different views of the world in the Administration," she told a television interviewer recently. There was simply a "Washington power struggle." Based on what? she was asked. "Maybe personal ambition. Or jealousy. Who gets what, when, where and how."

It all came to a head on Thursday, Oct. 13, 1983, when the President suddenly named Judge Clark Secretary of the Interior. Throughout that weekend Jeane Kirkpatrick's supporters in the Administration and in Congress pressed for her appointment to replace him as national security adviser. She was home in bed with the flu, and they telephoned her regularly to fill her in. The infighting was stormy. Several members of the National Security Planning Group say that James Baker strongly opposed her appointment and that Mr. Shultz threatened to resign if she got the job. Mr. Shultz denies having made such a threat.

On Oct. 17 the President gave the job to Judge Clark's deputy, Robert C. McFarlane, who was said to be Mr. Shultz's choice. Then the President sent for Dr. Kirkpatrick and offered her the job of White House counselor with Cabinet rank.

She thanked him, she says, but declined. As some of her aides point out, with Mr. McFarlane as the senior foreign-policy adviser in the White House, the counselor's job would have been superfluous.

Last August, Dr. Kirkpatrick delivered a rousing political speech at the Republican National Convention in Dallas. She received thunderous applause. But during the campaign that fall, she had a run-in with the White House staff. Dr. Kirkpatrick was asked to help prepare the President for his foreign-policy debate with Walter Mondale. The White House staff had written questions for the President's rehearsal, but Dr. Kirkpatrick thought they were weak, and she wrote new ones.

Then, she says, Mr. Baker produced some background information on Latin America that had been prepared by a staff member for the President to use in the debate. "It was inaccurate," she says, "and I couldn't bear the thought of the President going on television and making a mistake. So I took a deep breath and I corrected Baker. In public. He was pretty stoic, but I feared for

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...y life."

Before the election, Dr. Kirkpatrick told the President that she wanted to leave her United Nations post early in 1985; she had served longer than any American delegate in 20 years, and she was weary of the job and wanted to return to private life.

But at the same time Dr. Kirkpatrick let it be known, through the media, that she would stay on in the Administration if she were offered a job in which she could have, as one of her aides put it, "a major input in the making of foreign policy at a high level." Journalists were told that meant either Secretary of State or national security adviser.

The President said he wanted her to stay, but the only openings that were mentioned did not meet her requirements.

"You really couldn't blame the President," says Charles M. Lichenstein, the former deputy representative to the Security Council and a close friend of Dr. Kirkpatrick. "The President is fond of Jeane, but he wasn't willing to tear his Government apart to make a place for her. And he would have had to tear the Government apart, because wherever you set up Jeane — and I don't care what you call the job — you're setting up an anti-Secretary of State. Everyone who finds fault with Shultz would rally around Jeane and you'd have war."

And so, on Jan. 30, Dr. Kirkpatrick walked into the Oval Office and told the President she would continue to serve him faithfully as a private citizen and she would always be available when he needed her. And the President reportedly said how sorry he was and how much she would be missed and they kissed goodbye.

With her departure, the role of the chief delegate to the United Nations in the Administration's inner circle will be diminished. Her successor, Lieut. Gen. Vernon A. Walters, will not participate regularly in National Security Planning Group meetings. Secretary of State Shultz has won.

AND NOW DR. KIRKpatrick is back in private life — but very publicly. During a more or less typical recent week, she attended an all-day meeting of a Presidential task force on nuclear-weapons management to which she was appointed; flew to Nevada for a tour of military sites; canceled a date to speak at a fund-raiser for Senator Pete Wilson of California and flew instead to Central America at the Administration's request; spoke at two fund-raising rallies in Texas for the Nicaraguan contras, and returned to Washington, where she had a couple of press interviews, wrote a speech to deliver to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and selected fabric for her new office in Washington.

Her base of operations is the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, a conservative political research organization, where she is a senior fellow. Besides her other activities, she is writing a book about her experiences in Government and a weekly syndicated newspaper column on international affairs, she is delivering lectures around the country (at a fee of about $20,000 each) and she is preparing to resume teaching at Georgetown University next January.

As for her political future, she is still making the customary disclaimers. She says, "I have absolutely no intention of ever running for political office." But it wouldn't be the first time that a United Nations chief delegate turned to politics — New York's Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, for example. Says her friend, Mr. Lichenstein: "Of course she is interested. I assume she'll continue to say she finds it somewhat incredible that anyone should think of her as a President or Vice President of the United States. But she won't turn them off. She'd willingly be on a ticket with any of the major leaders of the Republican Party. But I don't think she would seek it actively."

Some of her friends have urged her to run for the Senate in her home state of Maryland next year, but she says she will not challenge the incumbent, Republican Senator Charles McC. Mathias Jr., if he seeks re-election.

Dr. Kirkpatrick has some obvious advantages as a candidate. She thinks fast on her feet. She is a dynamic speaker with the ability to convey complex ideas in terms the public can understand. She projects a pride in America that leaves many people feeling good about their country and themselves.

Dr. Kirkpatrick's chief strength, of course, is among conservatives in both parties who feel she represents their aspirations, and among women attracted by her feminist credentials. Whether her appeal will transcend ideology is another question.

"Jeane is extraordinarily complex," says Donna E. Shalala, president of Hunter College and a liberal Democrat. "She has a strong commitment to women's issues, a real sensitivity, and I like her. It would be very tough for me to vote for her, because of her international views. But I'd think about it — I wouldn't just knee-jerk, 'No.'"

David Garth, the political consultant, says that Dr. Kirkpatrick's "outspoken intelligence" and her United Nations record make her a "good possibility." As a "new-born Republican," he adds, "she'd get an awful lot of moderate Democrats."

But could she be nominated to a Presidential ticket? Because she has had no campaign experience, few professionals are likely to take her seriously as a candidate unless and until she has proved herself in some of the primaries. Mr. Garth, however, points out that she has an important advantage: "In Republican primaries, the conservatives vote heavily, which gives her a much better chance than she'd have otherwise."

Dr. Kirkpatrick's Democratic background and some of her views on domestic policies might raise questions among conservative Republicans. She calls herself a "welfare-state conservative" in the tradition of Hubert Humphrey and the late Senator Henry M. Jackson. She believes strongly that Government has an obligation to care for the weak and the needy, and she criticizes Republicans for showing more

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concern "about fiscal problems than about human values."

On the other hand, Dr. Kirkpatrick believes with conservatives that the President's cuts in social programs have been justified, and she shares his goal of reducing the size and power of the Federal Government.

The Presidential election is so far in the future that few political observers will hazard a guess as to Dr. Kirkpatrick's chances for national office.

But Robert Goodman, the Republican media consultant, offers a possible scenario. If Dr. Kirkpatrick decides to seek national office, he suspects: "She won't run a traditional race. She'll make serious speeches and she'll take strong positions on controversial issues, and people will regard her not so much as a candidate with political ambitions but more as an American leader with convictions. That could be mighty effective." ■

Jane Rosen is the United Nations correspondent for The Guardian of London.